

Author's BAZAAR ONLINE

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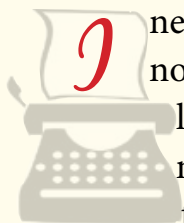
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FINDS FUTURE *in the cards*

By J. C. Lamanna Jr.



I never did get around to writing the great American novel. For many years while in the news business I, like so many reporters and editors, harbored the notion that in my retirement years, I would finally turn out that novel.

I decided that I would prepare for the big novel by spending my spare time writing short stories, a kind of practice program for the big work to come.

I found writing short fiction was a great deal of work. It followed, then, I reasoned, that writing a 60,000-word book would be a staggering chore.

I gave up short stories, and it was not yet time for the novel. I was frustrated. It became apparent that I would never have the staying power to create anything longer than a newspaper Sunday feature.

I had a close, personal friend who was a medical doctor. When we were boys, he had introduced me to the American Amateur Press Association, a hobby group of writers

and printers. I turned to him with my dilemma. His advice: “Lower your goals.” In time, I did.

When I entered my pre-retirement years, I read an article in a writer’s magazine on greeting card writing. I was hooked.

When I retired, I plunged into the greeting card world and discovered I had found a writing niche much suited to the retirement mode.

In time, I sold about half a dozen or more card ideas to secondary card companies. The major card makers buy little from unsolicited freelancer, relying, instead, on their house staffers and stables of well established creators of greeting cards.

Financial remuneration was modest, but often better than payment for much longer copy sold to magazines. In my case, payment for a card concept and copy has ranged from \$35 to \$150.

I find card writing enjoyable and an ideal kind of literary output at this point in my life. The copy is short and, because I specialize mainly in humorous card lines, it is satisfying to know I may bring some humor into people’s lives.

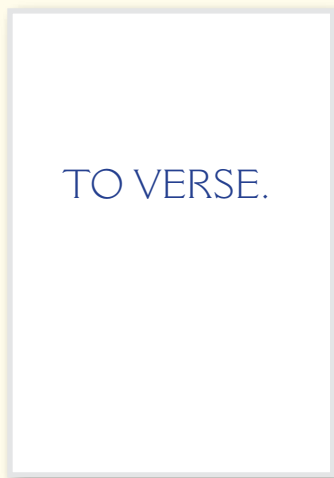
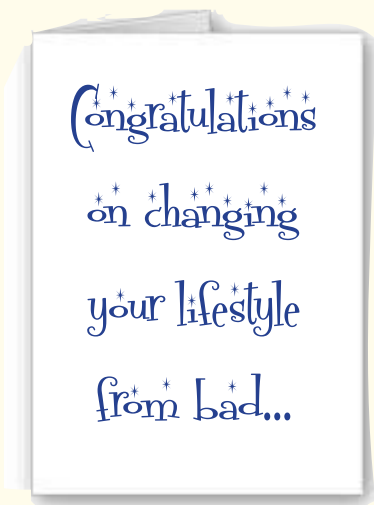
Card writing provides me with a sense of service to people who want to communicate and to keep in touch with

friends and relatives but find writers letters to be a chore.

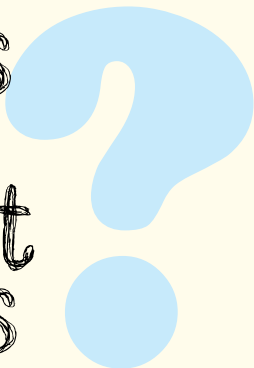
Another dividend stems from this kind of work. Greeting card editors are among the nicest people I have ever encountered. They are, largely, pleasant, helpful, patient, encouraging — qualities rarely encountered in magazine editors.

As it turns out, I never got around to writing a novel. Rather, I discovered something to which I am much more attuned at this stage of my life.

This brings to mind the kind of greeting card I would like to receive as a result of my move to what I consider a more suitable literary work. It would go like this:



Poets are not writers



By Sheryl L. Nelms

“Poets are not writers,” she said. “They just put words on paper.”

That statement by a romance writer during a workshop continues to stick in my mind.

Poets are writers, just like every other kind of writer. And as far as I know every variety of writer eventually puts words on paper or a computer disc or zip drive or hard drive.

Since I became a writer more than 30 years ago, I have attended many writers’ conferences as a student and later as a speaker. I find that a lot of writers, especially begin-

ning writers, tend to pigeonhole themselves at those conferences. Often they tend to only attend sessions in their genre, instead of sampling other perceptions.

During the past three decades I have attended classes at colleges, writer's conferences, including Bread Loaf and community classes in all varieties of writing. Each one of those classes has helped me grow as a writer and to imbue my writing with a slightly different perspective.

I also have attended the East Texas Romance Writers Conference, the Denton, Texas Storytellers conclave, gatherings of Cowboy Poets, journalism classes at Eastern Oklahoma College and The North Texas Outdoor Writer's Conference. I have attended sessions on romance writing, how to write wildlife stories, journalism writing and style, fiction writing, non-fiction writing, short story writing, true confessions, rhymed poetry, essays and flash fiction.



Every session has been a boost to my writing. I have learned how to conduct research. Yes, every poem that I send to an editor has been researched. If an editor questions what I have written, I can back up my work with a bibliography. Several editors have questioned facts in my

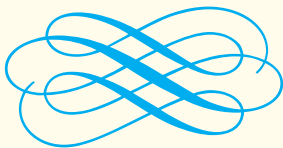
poems. Each time that happens, I reply with a quote and book title.

Another skewed idea is that a poem comes ready to publish. Many writers who claim they are poets believe that their words are a gift, as is. They believe that nothing in their original draft should be changed.

When I am writing a poem I revise, revise and revise. I may stand the poem on its head. Give it a different view of the world. A different take. Often I shuffle the lines just to see what happens. In this case, I use the fiction writer's "What If?"

One of the best classes I have taken was "Novel Writing" taught by Jack Bickham. I constantly use ideas I heard in that class every day in my writing.

In replying to the romance writer that I met years ago, I would argue that writers are poets and that poets are writers. It does not matter what you are writing. A good writer is a good writer. And a bad one is a bad one.



By Sheryl L. Nelms

Dad was reading
my brother and me

a bedtime story
that night

as we took turns
scratching his back

Alice had just
squeezed
through

the keyhole
into the
black

beyond

when the mirror
fell off

the bedroom wall
with a splintered

crash

and we three
felt the
fright

of Alice's landing



**The
night
that
Alice
fell
down
the
rabbit
hole**

cycle of nature



Winter is the time of year that may tests one's soul. At first the starkness is refreshing, but after a few months, our soul wants change! So, when is it going to change? Patience. It will come. 🙏

BY RICHARD GAIL REA

Ah, yes, this is the beginning of what we have been waiting for. The cold north wind shifts to the south and paints the sky and warms the earth.

The neighborhood is filled with the songs of various birds.

Then the rains stop, and one notes a thirsty critter drinking another critter's bath water.

Now the full might of summer is upon us, and we begin to look forward to the cooling wind from the north. This seems to happen just when our allergies have adjusted to a variety of flowers.

We have a little time yet to enjoy nature's gift to us. However, we know these gifts are only here for a short period of time. Take time to fill the soul with this bounty because it will soon be time for the wind to shift to the north again. This shift is signaled by nature itself. Shrubs and trees begin to slowly change their colors and to lose their foliage.

Once again the cycle of life is completed, and nature's colorful beauty is hidden for another season.



THE CASE FOR PEACE

By June Tuthill Bassemir ■ In 1944 my brother Bruce W. Tuthill gave “the supreme sacrifice” — his life — for his country during World War II. It was supposed to be the last war.

We lived for about a month with the “Missing in Action” notice until the final dreaded telegram of “Killed in Action” came. As hard a blow as it was for us to bear, Mr. Miller, the taxi man who delivered it, had just as hard a time. He tried for as long as he could to delay the news of the telegram. For you see, he was the husband of Bruce’s first-grade teacher and his job was to relay these telegrams as they came in to the parents in our small town.

It was a dark day in November when we received the news. Its devastation is no less potent today than it was then but there are fewer and fewer folks still living to remember

him. Gone are his mother, father, his eldest brother, both grandmothers, the only grandfather he knew, uncles and aunts. Gone are his two closest buddies, his first girlfriend and his admiring Floridian cousin who thought so much of him that she even named one of her sons Bruce.

He was born on April 18, 1924, and died 20 years, four months and eight days later. He was quite proud of his birthday and never failed to let people know that it was the date of the ride of Paul Revere. He graduated from high school in 1942, and after working at Grumman Aircraft for a short time, enlisted in the Army Air Corp in 1943. His basic training was at Camp Upton, N.Y., and from there he went on to Miami, Tulsa, Las Vegas and Sheffield, Texas. In Tulsa he met “Billy” Emmons, a nice girl whom I am sure he was planning to see when he came home.

Finally, he was ready to be shipped out and the Army gave him a “Ten Day Delay en Route” to visit the family in the spring of ’44. The pictures of that time are curled and yellowed now, but oh how the memory lingers.

All four siblings lined up in profile for that picture – from the tallest and eldest brother; then the second eldest brother, then Bruce; then me, his only sister. That day he showed off his bulky brown shiny flight suit and his khaki uniform with the Staff Sgt. insignia on the sleeve. At one

point he noticed I was wearing the gold plated locket he sent me. Someone snapped a picture of us just as he said, “Oh... you’re wearing my locket – and my picture is inside.” I still have that picture with the locket attached to the outside of the frame. I look at it and see two young people unaware of the photographer absorbed in the joy of the moment.

He loved his family and his hometown and wrote frequently from the day he enlisted to the bombing days while stationed in Italy. We didn’t know then where he was but afterward we learned that he was part of the bombing raids that targeted the Ploesti Oil Fields in Romania.



I became the recipient of all his letters and tried to put them in a book but reading them with his hope of what he wanted to do when he came home expressed in all the letters caused my heart strings to stretch and the tears to flow. I put them aside thinking that time will ease the sorrow.

My life went on; I married, children were born, houses were built, moves were made – and still the letters followed with me. Then, in 2009 my eldest son in his 50s became interested in his Uncle Bruce, whom he never met. A re-

stored B-24 plane was to be on display in Austin, Texas, and they were offering rides. Richard planned to go.

I dug out the letters to read and to supply the information my son wanted. What was Bruce's position in the plane? Did the plane have a name? What was the squadron's number? How many missions did Bruce fly? I found that even though tears flowed again, the more I read of Bruce's familiar handwriting, the closer I felt to him.

He lived in a tent and frequently would write his letter as "the candle is getting low" or "I'm writing this by flashlight." How he longed to "eat grandpa's roast corn down at the Bay" and "What was Dad growing in the garden this year?"

Bruce had adopted a dog, a mutt really, and the guys called him "Elmer." Elmer slept with Bruce on his cot. At one point he and his crew members went to the Isle of Capri and he thought it was "the most beautiful place (he) had ever seen." When servicemen wrote home, they only had to write "Free" where the stamp would be. V-mail was another method of receiving mail. One sheet of writing was photographed and sent in a small envelope.

While it was good to receive those letters, it was less intimate than a regular handwritten one. Quite often the letters were censored if something was said that would im-

peril the safety of service personnel or give information to the enemy.

He said, “After fifty missions, we get to fly to Miami Beach for a 21-day rest.” I don’t know if that was a rumor or if it was really true. He was on his 35th mission when his plane was hit. All but two of the crew were able to parachute to safety, but Bruce was not one of them. He occupied the top turret gunner’s position on the B-24, having proven himself to be a good marksman. One crew member, who lived in Brooklyn, came to visit us after returning stateside. He told us more than we wanted to know about that last flight. Too late to stop him, he said my brother’s chute failed to open.

I have come to the end of this writing. My eyes are swollen again, but this time it has been comforting to share my brother’s thoughts and activities with my interested son. There always seems to be another generation in the wings that has not learned that hatred, revenge, envy, greed, dictatorships and fighting only lead to bloodshed and heartache for those left behind.

Of course, they say that World War II was “an honorable war,” but really in the end “honorable” or not, if you have lost a loved one in any war, they are never forgotten and the void is never filled.

Authors

Jim Lamanna

Following military service during World War II, J.C. "Jim" Lamanna Jr., graduated from of Syracuse University in 1950. He began his news career as editor of a suburban Syracuse suburban weekly. A year later, he became a crime and general assignment reporter at the Syracuse Post-Standard. In 1955, Lamanna became news editor at WFBL Radio in Syracuse, where he did daily newscasts and one-minute daily local commentaries. In 1962, he joined a statewide bank in Syracuse, where he became an assistant vice president and regional public relations officer. He has been a member of the AAPA since boyhood. He is an AAPA past president. Email Jim at jameslamanna@yahoo.com



Sheryl Nelms

Sheryl Nelms is a frequent contributor of poems to Author's Bazaar. This month she writes about her writing career and shares a poem about a rabbit hole, which she says is a true story. "It was so perfect," she says. "My dad, my brother and I were totally petrified when it happened. We were in the living room and the mirror that fell was in the bedroom. It made a really big noise just as Alice fell down the rabbit hole in the story that my dad was reading to us." Email Sheryl at shnelms@aol.com



Richard Gail Rea

Richard Gail Rea is an emeritus professor of Communication at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. He wrote "Cycle of Nature" as part of his grief therapy after his wife for 55 years died. He was her caretaker as she battled cancer for more than 14 months. He loves to read and cheer the Arkansas Razorbacks. Call those Hogs! Email Richard at rrea5@cox.net



June Bassemir

June Bassemir lives on Long Island, N.Y. in rural Jamesport 80 miles east of New York City. Besides doing volunteer work, as a docent, her hobbies are rug braiding, rug hooking, baking, creative art and writing. "Last year I bought a 4' x 5' wooden shed, put it on my front lawn and called it 'The Cookie Shed.' Because I can't eat all that comes out of the oven, on weekends I put out cookies with a sign that says 'Free Samples Today.'" She wrote "A Case for Peace" in February 2009. Email June at junebassemir@aol.com



You're invited!

Your name could appear on this page in the future if you enjoy writing. Much of the material is now produced by members of the American Amateur Press Association, a nationwide non-profit hobby organization founded in 1936. A number of members print and publish hobby journals that are circulated monthly to more than 200 other members. You need not be a member to submit manuscripts to *Author's Bazaar*, but if you are interested in learning more about this hobby group of writers, printers and publishers, check [this website](#).

